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ADDENDUM II

Analysis of Written Comments
Agency Employee Survey
DD/A Respondents

1. (A/IUO) The employee survey of 1976 produced [REDACTED] from employees of the Directorate of Administration. Thirty-two percent of the DD/A respondents provided written comments to the survey. This analysis deals with the written responses to Question #87, which solicited comments at the option of the participant to any item on the questionnaire and offered the participant the opportunity to make suggestions and/or remarks regarding any topics of interest pertaining to the Agency.

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2. (A/IUO) The respondents represent employees from all levels of the DDA Career Service. They direct their comments to approximately 24 topic areas of which eight appear to be of major concern. Both male and female employees identify the same eight topics which they feel should be called to the attention of Agency management. A judgment as to the quantity and substance of these respondent comments yields the following results. The topic areas are listed in their order of importance.

- a) Promotions and Rankings
- b) Career Development
- c) Counseling
- d) Fitness Reports
- e) Equal Employment Opportunity
- f) Vacancy Notices
- g) Quality-Step Increases
- h) Letters of Instruction

3. (C) As might be expected, the majority of comments in each topic area are in the negative vein, however, many offer constructive criticism or statements of general complaints and observations. Several respondent remarks reveal ignorance on their part as to certain basic personnel programs. Specifically, these employees appear to lack knowledge of: a) the EEO complaint procedure, b) the use of vacancy notice systems; and c) the existence of Agency counseling services, especially career counseling. A brief analysis and commentary on the topic areas follows:

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a) Promotions and Rankings

Many strong statements are made concerning the Agency's promotion system. The majority are critical and cite the subjective manner in which panels operate. Some openly suggest that promotions are made on the basis of friendship from belonging to the "club" or through the "buddy" system. There are also suggestions that an individual performing well in a higher-graded position should be promoted within a year, instead of having to prove himself for 3-5 years. Following are excerpts from male employees in the grade levels GS-12-15:

"The various promotion panels within the Agency maintain they can be perfectly objective and fair about those whom they consider for promotion, while at the same time rewarding the more talented employees by rapid advancement. I believe the promotion panels are not objective as they claim to be, and the real promotion system we have in the Agency is simply the promotion of the favorites of the powerful and the holding down of those who are not in favor, rather than those who are the most deserving. In other words, the Agency's promotion system is arbitrary, discriminatory, and prejudicial. These are the very reasons the Civil Service rules and regulations are instituted in the U. S. Government. I believe the Agency's management wishes to continue the system we have so they can continue to play favorites, instead of enhancing the functioning of the Agency, as claimed".

"I understand my Career Service promotion system, but I feel that it is unfair. An individual may be given the opportunity for promotion when they are placed in a job slot that is one or two grades higher than their present level. If the individual has the responsibility, performs and does the job well, they should be promoted within the first year, and not 3 to 5 years later. I feel that promotions are given out as to "Who you know" and are not based on the workmanship or performance of ones duties".

"Eliminate the "buddy" system".

"Promote individuals according to their ability to do a good job and not base it on friendship, popularity, gossip, etc. Find out if employees are happy in what they are doing, what their goals are and if they need additional training to perform at the degree expected of them".

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"It seems as though personnel management and the Career Service are very unjust in their decisions towards promotions. An individual may be ranked extremely high in his/her sub-group and manner, but will receive a promotion because of their loyalty or length of service with the Agency".

"My biggest gripe about the promotion system in my Career Service is the fact that the members of the promotion panels vote not only on the material in subject's folder but also on oral material expressed by members of the panels. While this is advantageous for the candidate who is known to some member of the panel, it works to the detriment of one not so known. I think that only material contained in the folder should be considered".

"I do not know how my Career Service ranks me".

"It would be very helpful to know exactly where one stands in the CEL and in which areas one is weak".

b) Career Development

Comments concerning Career Development and/or Career Management appear to focus on three areas, i.e., the lack of planning at the senior level; the individual employee's responsibility in the career management process; and the still effective employee who is pressed into taking early retirement.

"Career Management in my sub-group is nothing more than moving bodies from point A to point B for the 'needs of the service'. Believe it is time that career development plans are discussed with employees before the organization loses any more talent".

"I do not believe my career service has any idea what they plan for me in the next 2-8 years".

"I strongly feel that one's career goals can only be achieved by the individual".

"It worries me to see effective older employees forced into early retirement".

"Do not believe proper credit is given for long and faithful service because of the excessive effort made to make headroom for new young employees".

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"Guidance should be truthful and realistic".

Many positive responses are offered concerning the current efforts underway in some DDA offices to more systematically plan employee Career Development.

"My answers may all sound one-sided (positive), but it is because I am very happy with my job".

"The sessions with my supervisor in planning the next couple of assignments for me have been productive and worthwhile".

"I feel that, for the first time in my career, I can see ahead for several years, instead of several months".

"I feel the personnel management system has improved and is reasonably effective".

"The Agency has made great efforts to improve personnel handling procedures and to provide a better climate for career enhancement. However, much still needs to be done to bring supervisors and managers to the proper level of awareness in order to effectively support certain personnel programs - EEO, employment of the handicapped, providing better opportunities for women".

"Although we're taken a long step toward developing formalized personnel and career development systems, e.g., PDP, APP, Ranking Policies, etc., and done well in publicizing these to employees, still I find, at least in my sub-group, many instances of the office Head or Deputy, exercising "hip pocket" routine in assignments".

c) Counseling

A number of respondents express ignorance or doubts about the counseling services available to them. They state that they are unaware such services exist; that the services are undertaken too late in their careers; or that the professionalism of the counselors is in doubt. A few typical responses are:

"I didn't know the Agency had any counseling services".

"In the past six months I had my first career counseling session and for me it is far too late".

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"Don't have a Career Counselor".

"Counselors in my component are not professional - they are fellow technicians".

d) Fitness Reports

With respect to the fitness report system, some of the employees who have served with the Agency for more than twenty years, make a comparison with the old "form" and conclude that our present way is perhaps the best.

"Compared to the outrageous system used in the 1950's (all done in secret, resulting in mistrust of supervisors and reviewing officials), the present way is fairer and as objective as could possibly be".

Two observations reflect employee judgments of the problem of inflated ratings.

"Throughout my career, I have consistently been rated higher than I would have rated myself".

"Most supervisors do not take the time to write meaningful FR's and use high ratings to appease the employee".

e) Equal Employment Opportunity

The EEO program is both sensitive and difficult to administer as reflected in employee comments. Perceptions between the sexes in this area differ considerably. The male at the GS-9-13 level seems to feel threatened by what he believes are unfair advantages offered to minority group members by the system. Typical comments are:

"Any program which appears to discriminate against the majority is doomed to failure".

"EEO is generally regarded among most of my associates as a negative program".

"In selecting new employees, I feel that EEO has done us a great disservice by disqualifying excellent candidates only because they are not members of a minority group".

Women employees, while not feeling threatened express dissatisfaction with the lack of progress in the EEO area. Examples of their feelings are:

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"My rate of pay is lower by 2 grades compared to men doing the same job. Why is this"?

"Females are treated worse than males".

"They seem to downgrade jobs after replacing males by females".

"There are no women in my career subpanel".

A few female employees are not aware of the procedures currently in effect, for addressing EEO complaints, e.g., "I have been trying to find out the correct chain of command in which to report a very serious EEO sex discrimination against me".

In expressing a different reaction to the Agency's "push" in the EEO area one female respondent wrote, "Some female employees (probably more than are willing to admit it), feel we are being pushed too hard in the name of EEO. We are not allowed to "like" the job we are doing but are being rotated too much. Not all of us want to be the first woman president, so, please, let us alone. Too much training is as bad as not enough".

f) Vacancy Notices

The Vacancy Notice system draws much criticism. Not a single favorable comment is offered. Many respondents express the opinion that the vacancy notice system borders on being a "hoax" because advertised vacancies are filled before vacancy notices are even distributed. Sample responses are as follows:

"I think many offices are only going through the motions with vacancy notices".

"I'm sure there are more jobs available than what appears in vacancy notices. The few that are circulated are probably ones for which persons have already been chosen".

"The vacancy notice program is a comedy. The DD/O does not circulate vacancy notices, nor will they consider qualified personnel from other components. Some jobs have been filled before the notices go out, so, why waste paper"!

"The vacancy notices are not distributed the way they should be. I usually find out about them through friends in other offices. By the time they get into the notebook in the library, it is too late to apply".

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"Never have seen any vacancy notices".

"My supervisor reads all the vacancy notices, then decides to whether to pass them along or not. If he thinks someone in the office is qualified for a higher-graded job, he will not make distribution".

"I have never heard of nor seen a vacancy notice".

There appears to be a significant amount of fear of reprisal among employees who may have considered responding to a vacancy notice. Typical reactions are:

"I strongly believe that responding to a vacancy notice would jeopardize an individual's career in my career service".

"My office looks upon replies to vacancy notices as an insult to the office; being a traitor; quitting in the middle of a battle. One is viewed with suspicion and not having the best interests of the office in mind, and this is kept in mind at CEL time".

g) Quality-Step Increases

Many of the DD/A respondents feel that the QSI is an excellent method of rewarding employees, but, believe it is not always granted in accordance with its intended purpose.

"QSI's have been used as a tool when promotions are not available. However, in most cases they are given fairly".

"The QSI is used in lieu of promotion".

"If management followed the criteria for awarding QSI's, it would be an excellent program".

"QSI's certainly go a long way towards improving morale and healing the wounded pride in many of us".

"There appears to be no correlation between use of the QSI and quality performance".

"For the most part, QSI's are given on the basis of longevity, for morale and in lieu of promotion".

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h) Letters of Instruction

Respondent comments reveal that the LOI's are either not being utilized or that their primary purpose has been misunderstood. There appears to be little attempt on the part of many supervisors and employees to use the LOI.

Typical comments on Letters of Instruction are:

"As of this date, no LOI has been written".

"I have never seen my LOI".

"LOI's in my component are confused with job descriptions".

"The LOI is the most absurd item I have ever seen".

"The LOI is useless".

"I am against LOI's at senior levels. GS-14's and above employees should already know".

"Never have seen an LOI despite numerous requests".

4. (A/IUO) Other comments and observations made by DD/A employees are generally favorable to the Agency and point to a feeling of pride in being a member. Many lower and middle-level employees express appreciation, not only for being included in the survey but for management's concern and continuing efforts to look into organizational problems, e.g., "I support management efforts, via surveys, to keep abreast of problems and work on surmounting them". In comparing the Agency's personnel management program an employee makes the following comment, "Compared to the other government and industry organizations with whom I have worked, the Agency does very well by almost any comparative criteria",

5. (C) In conclusion it is somewhat disturbing to learn that among a number of employees, a marked lack of knowledge and understanding exists regarding many of personnel programs now in existence. Perhaps the false assumption is made that, since policies and practices are articulated by management and distributed, they are read and understood by all. If this is true, then some form of follow-up action is needed to ascertain that the execution of management policies and practices is accomplished with employee understanding and support. Although some employees may continue to exercise selectivity in their reading and understanding, close follow-up and program evaluation should be continued.

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